

639 D Street, NW (Commercial Building)
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-603

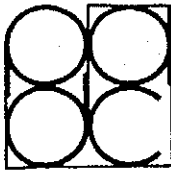
HABS
DC,
WASH.,
355-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HABS DC-603



PENNSYLVANIA
AVENUE
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION

425 13TH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

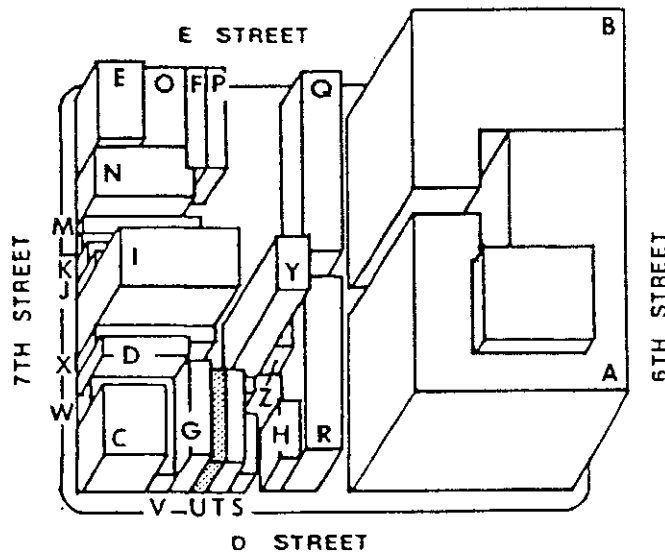
GENERAL CONSULTANTS

ANDERSON NOTTER/MARIANI
GENERAL PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
DEVROUX & PURNELL
ASSOCIATE ARCHITECTS
DAVID MCLAREN HART & ASSOCIATES
PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
MONK DUNSTONE ASSOCIATES
COST ESTIMATING CONSULTANT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

HABS
DC,
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Commercial Building
639 D Street, NW
Lot 812



This documentation was produced for mitigation purposes by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation. Additional documentation exists for Square 457, within which this structure stands. For photographs, historical, and descriptive data on Square 457, see HABS No. DC-597.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The 639 Building occupies a narrow compact site along the north side of D Street midway between Sixth and Seventh Streets. This late-Nineteenth Century commercial style row structure houses a clothier, as do the adjacent buildings to either side, a four-story building to the west and a three-story building to the east. Although this three-bay brick building appears to contain three full stories, the third story is comprised of only a shallow windowed attic accessible via a small stair below. As with its immediate neighbors, the site is higher at the rear of the building. Because of this half level grade change, the loading dock permits access to the second floor. The flat roof is standing-seam metal.

Wooden joists and wood flooring span the narrow dimension between the party walls. The building's first floor is concrete slab on grade. The rectangular building measures twenty feet along D Street, one hundred feet in depth and forty feet in height. The building's facade reflects an arrangement of windowed rental or storage space above ground floor display and entrance.

The simple facade is adorned only by corbeling and a wood round ogee molding at the cornice line. Windows are all square headed, one-over-one wood sash, with wood lintels and sills. The second story windows are boarded over. A projecting canopy covers the canted display windows to either side of the entrance. The grey painted brick is laid in common bond with headers appearing every eighth course.

Each floor consists of a single open space, with the single run stair at the northwest corner. The ceilings, which appear original, are covered with narrow beaded boards running longitudinally.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The 639 Building is a severely utilitarian version of the typical Washington commercial row structure. The building's lack of ornamentation and articulation, its partial third story and its wood lintels and sills mark it as a simpler rendition of the area's usually more elaborate commercial architecture. Both the immediate area and the district contain several examples of these modest commercial buildings. Permit information indicates that the building was erected before 1877.

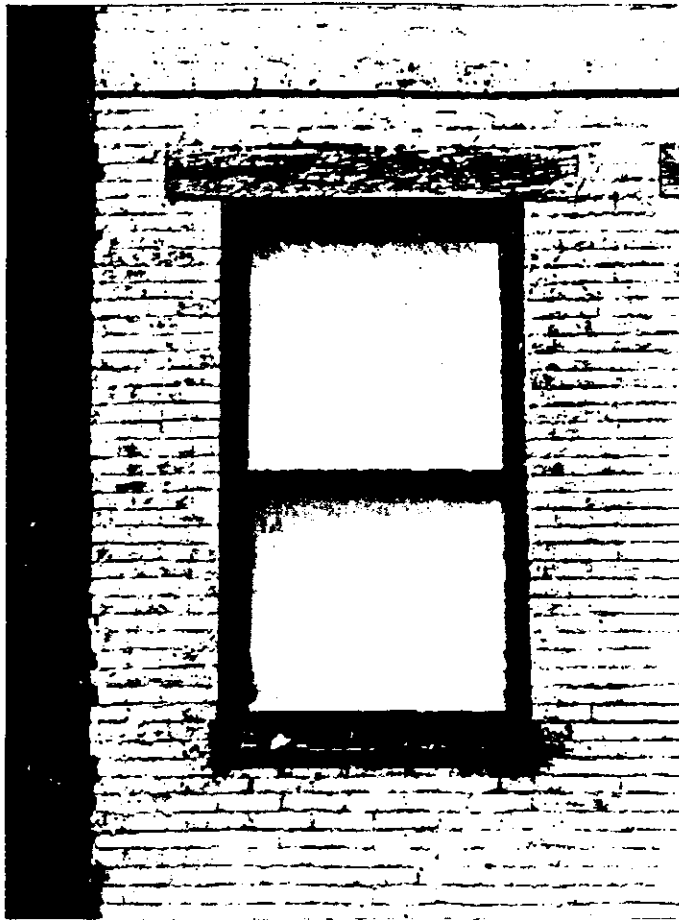
The building stands amidst similarly scaled brick buildings which define most of the north side of this portion of D Street, extending west and terminating at the monumental J. Edgar Hoover Building.



D STREET (SOUTH) FACADE



SOUTH FACADE: OBLIQUE
VIEW SHOWING RELATION
TO ADJACENT BUILDINGS



SOUTH FACADE:
TYPICAL WINDOW



SOUTH FACADE: DETAIL OF CORNICE

Lot 7
639-643 D Street

When originally platted (Bastert, 1872), Lot 7 was a rectangular lot situated in a southwest quadrant of the Square.

1819.....The lot was owned by John R. Plater. No lot or improvement assessment was given in the Records.

1824.....Plater's lot was assessed for \$1204.00.

After this date, the Tax Assessment Records showed a division of Lot 7 into three sublots. These are given individual listings.

Lot 7 East (Sublot 812)
639 D Street

Lot 812 was a slender rectangular lot measuring approximately 20' x 100'.

1829/33..Jason Kennedy's assessments were \$501.00 for the lot, and \$100.00 for improvements to the structure.

1844.....A.H. Young, the owner at this time, had a lot value of \$602.00.

1859.....Young's ownership was transferred to William Deak. His lot was assessed \$1908.00.

1862
to

1872.....The building was occupied by a variety of merchants and craftsmen. These included a boot/shoemaker, cabinet maker, furniture dealer and lamp dealer.

1870.....The W.G. Deale Estate was assessed \$300.00 for building improvements.

1874
to

1879.....George Ryneal, Jr. sold paints and oils at 639 D Street.

1878/79
and

1883/84..William G. Deale's lot value was \$3512.00.

1888
to

1894.....Restaurants predominated in the building during this time.

1893/94..Theodore A. Harding and William M. Butler had assumed ownership of the land. They were assessed \$4516.00 for the lot, \$2500.00 for building improvements.

1899/

1900.....The owner's assessments dropped to \$4014.00 for the ground, \$2200.00 for building improvements. Until 1910 Mackenzie Brothers sold hats, caps and furs at this address (City Directories).

1902

to

1906.....George Goldberg sold notions and second-hand clothing at 639 D Street.

1906.....Building Permit #2032, 12/15/1906: Two wooden signs. Cost: \$50.00.

1907.....Building Permit #3492½, 5/6/1907: Repair back porch of three-story brick building occupied as a store. Builders: F.C. Potts.
Cost: \$35.00.

1916

to

1924.....The building was occupied as the clothing store of Rosenthal & Levy.

1919.....The Baist map indicated the lot as No. 812.

1925

to

1948.....Joseph Levy sold used clothing at this address.

1928.....Building Permit #5895, 5/22/1928: New store windows with 3' projection. Architect/Builder: Samuel, Marion & Smith, registered.

1954

to

1967.....The building was leased by Louie's, Inc., a men's clothing store.

1981.....The structure is used by a small commercial enterprise.

SOURCES

Baist Real Estate Atlas

Bastert and Enthoffer Plat Maps

Boyd's City Directories

District of Columbia Building Permits

District of Columbia General Assessment Records

District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds

District of Columbia Surveyor's Office Records

District of Columbia Tax Records

Hopkins Real Estate Atlas

Polk's City Directories

Property Map for Downtown Urban Renewal Area for District of Columbia Redevelopment
Land Agency

Sanborn Insurance Map